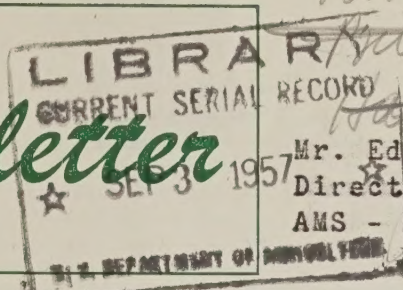


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Newsletter



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Director, Cotton Div.
AMS - Rm. 302 Annex

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ORGANIZATION OF PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYEES OF THE U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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THE LEGISLATIVE PICTURE

As the 85th Congress goes into its last lap of the first session, the outlook is rather obscure. The following is the picture as at present. A final round-up on legislation will be in the next newsletter, after Congress adjourns.

Pay Raise outlook as regards Congressional action is good, but the opinion in Washington is that it will be vetoed and there will probably not be time for Congress to consider over-riding the veto. The House on July 23 by a vote of 379 to 38 passed H.R. 2474, to increase pay of postal field employees a flat \$546. Such action on postal pay in the past has opened the way for similar legislation for classified employees, and this rule may apply in the present case. The Senate Post Office and Civil Service Committee has approved a 7½ percent increase for classified employees, and the House Committee an 11 percent increase. These across-the-board increases, while not in accordance with OPEDA's specific recommendations, we think are better than a lump-sum increase. On page 2, we cite the lack of action on the part of classified employees with respect to their problems. The present situation accentuates this fact, as the postal employees have as usual led the way, and it is quite possible that classified employees may be left out of the picture.

At House Committee hearings on pay-raise legislation, our Executive Officer received probably the most favorable reception of any employee representative testifying. Also, the OPEDA statement prepared by Chairman Bob Hill and his Economic Committee was specifically commended by Rep. Lesinski, who said:

"Mr. Lasseter, whoever prepared the statement did an extremely good piece of work. It is very comprehensive and explains to the members percentage-wise and otherwise what the situation is all about." (See June Newsletter for excerpts from statement.)

Incidentally, OPEDA's pay scale used in the statement was the only suggestion of any employee group which was reproduced in full in any Washington newspaper. (John Cramer's column, The Washington Daily News, July 11, 1957)

Increased Annuities for Retirees — This legislation has been reported out of the Senate Committee and will undoubtedly be reported out of the House Committee. Fate of the measure, however, is pretty well tied up with pay-raise legislation, and the same prediction applies.

Federal-State Retirement — Another bill, S. 2549, has been introduced which we believe (with one amendment) covers all eligible employees. Outlook for this session, however, is not good. In fact, it will not likely be acted upon this session. The OPEDA Educational Advisory Committee has engaged W. L. Dutton, former Executive Officer of OPEDA, to assist with Executive Department contacts and to serve as chairman of the Advisory Committee and of a small steering committee. A detailed progress report was sent on July 19 to all contributors to the special fund, together with a copy of S.2549 and of a proposed amendment. Any member who is interested and did not receive a copy will be sent one on request.

Training legislation is still held up in the House Committee and, unless a change is made with respect to the Government agencies administering it, will probably rest a while in the Committee. Difference between the Senate-passed version and the House opinion on it does not in our opinion present too wide a gap to be bridged, and OPEDA is actively working on this problem.

Health Insurance — Postponed until next session, as there is not time for hearings.

Liability Insurance for drivers of motor vehicles (S. 384) — No further action, but outlook is good.

The foregoing predictions may be a little too pessimistic, for very often in the last few days of Congress the log-jam is broken and things happen fast. Let us point out, too, that pending legislation will be held over until the next session, during which the climate will undoubtedly be more favorable. Actually, OPEDA has been more active in support of legislation this year than any year in the past and has received much more recognition and publicity. Even though all our efforts may not be successful this year, we are sure our work will eventually show results.

STRATEGY ON PAY RAISES

Writing to C. E. Burkhead, OPEDA president, Economic Committee Chairman Bob Hill called attention to a story in Joe Young's column in the Evening Star on June 26, entitled "Indifferent." Mr. Young cited remarks by Senator Watkins (R) of Utah during Senate pay hearings:

" 'Senator Watkins said he had been swamped with mail from postal employee constituents of his asking support of postal pay raises. The Senator added he had heard nothing from other Federal employee constituents--which left him in doubt as to whether they really cared about obtaining pay boosts.

" 'All of which raises a point that is sorely troubling Federal classified employee leaders. The story they hear from members of Congress is the same--postal workers are writing in droves to their Senators and Representatives asking them to support postal pay increases, while virtually nothing is heard from classified employees.

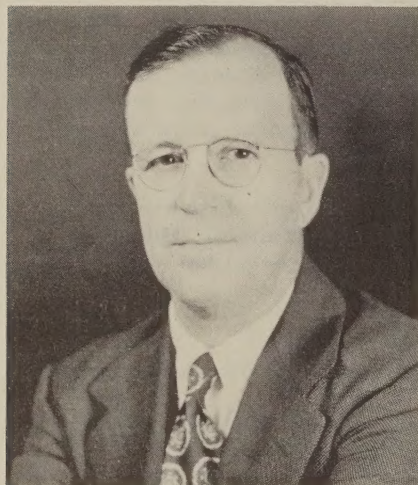
" 'In past Federal pay raises, the heavily organized postal workers have led the way and Congress, in a sense of fairness, has also voted classified employees pay raises. But Federal classified employee leaders are fearful that one of these days Congress will vote postal workers a pay raise and leave classified employees out in the cold.' "

After quoting from Joe Young's column, Mr. Hill stated: "I personally heard Senator Watkins testify. He made a strong statement in support of a raise for postal employees. He pointedly left out classified employees and indicated that he had no evidence of their need for a raise." Mr. Hill went on: "The policy of riding the coat tails of the postal workers I believe to be a poor one. Apparently some members of Congress are getting fed up with it. I believe each group should stand on its own legs and give a fair statement of its case. This need not involve any group conflict. They can mutually support each other. Differences among their recommendations can be worked out by the committees."

And, to the point, Mr. Hill recommended: "Since OPEDA represents a special group, not adequately represented by any other organization, it should use every proper channel to get its case before the Congress. These channels include: (1) Personal testimony before the Committees; (2) Statements for the record at hearings; (3) Personal contacts with key legislators; (4) Letters, etc., from members to their own Congressmen and Senators stating their cases in their own words." He concluded: "While the first three approaches, primarily by the Executive Officer, are of great importance, I believe the last method to be the most effective and the most neglected. I hope something can be done about it."

We think this letter from our Economic Committee Chairman speaks for itself. In this connection, we would like to quote from an OPEDA Fact Sheet of some years back: "OPEDA has never been, is not, and will not be a pressure group motivated solely by selfish interest and purpose. Naturally it is concerned with the individual interests of its members, but it also is concerned with the best interests of the Department, the agencies comprising the Department, and the best general interests of the nation. It is concerned not only with pay for service but also with service for pay. It prefers to attain its objectives with facts and reason and logic, based on sound technical knowledge, wide experience, and superior judgment, rather than through political appeals, non-cooperation, or coercion."

In the case of supporting a Federal pay raise for classified employees at this time, we believe there would be no conflict of individual interests and "the best general interests of the nation." One point made in the OPEDA statement presented at the hearings was that adequate pay is necessary to "enable the Government to recruit on better terms for positions in the entrance grades for professional and other trained workers, and to give incentive for making a career in the public service." OPEDA has stated its case as an Organization. Individual members can add much-needed support. We earnestly hope our members will follow Mr. Hill's suggestion.



OPEDA MEMBERS HEAR ABOUT EARTH SATELLITE — OPEDA members were taken "out of this world" into outer space on June 18 by Dr. John P. Hagen of the Naval Research Laboratory and director of Project Vanguard, who discussed plans for launching the man-made Earth Satellite for upper-air research during the International Geophysical Year. Using a life-size (20-inch) model of the satellite and a small model of the launching rocket, he explained that the origin of the program dated back to 1953 when plans were being laid for the I.G.Y. by the cooperating countries. Then the U.S. announced in July 1955 it would attempt to put a satellite into space, and the task was assigned to the Department of Defense, where it wound up in the Naval Research Laboratory. After various considerations, the following plan evolved: The 20-inch sphere, to contain a miniature radio transmitter, and other intricate scientific equipment, not exceeding 21 pounds, will be launched by a 3-stage rocket from Florida, probably early next year. Radio tracking stations will be used, as the satellite will be almost invisible at its 300 mile distance. Numerous volunteer "moon-watch" teams are being organized throughout the country to spot the satellite by telescopes. Scientists hope to mea-

sure ultra violet radiation, intensity of cosmic rays, measurement of bombardment by micrometeorites, etc. All OPEDA members who heard Dr. Hagen probably rushed to join the "moon watchers." For those who missed out, the LIFE magazine of June 3 gives photographs and full information on the project.

MEMBERSHIP in OPEDA is now over 4400. New memberships may be accepted during the third quarter for \$4.00 for the remainder of 1957 and all of 1958. Invite a co-worker to join. 83286